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NOTES FROM THE WEATHER BUREAU LIBRARY.

By C. FITZHUGH TALMAN, Professor in charge of Library.

WINDY-WEEP.

The Century Dictionary Supplement contains the word *windy-weep*, which is defined as "The cool, gentle, evening breeze which descends upon a broad, quiet river, with a sighing or weeping sound, from a forest in a tributary ravine." The term is said to be an American colloquialism, but it is not supported by a quotation, and the present writer has not been able to obtain any further information concerning it from the publishers of the dictionary in question. It does not appear to be in any other reference book. The writer will be grateful to any reader of the MONTHLY WEATHER REVIEW who will inform him as to the part or parts of the United States in which this term is used, or refer him to any instances of its use in literature.

NAMES OF THE COLD SPELL IN MAY.

The traditional cold spell in May has been known in this country as "blackberry," "dogwood," or "redbud winter." By J. R. Sage, long director of the Iowa Weather Service, it was named "the May dip." The same phenomenon is widely known in England as "blackthorn winter," and locally in Suffolk as "sloe-hatching time." The term "May chills" occurs in Sir W. N. Shaw's

"Forecasting Weather," page 138. German folklore has handed down the tradition of three successive cold days in May—viz., May 11–13 in northern Germany, and May 12–14 in southern Germany—dedicated in the church calendar to Sts. Mamertus, Pancratius, Servatius, and Bonifacius. These days, as well as the saints themselves, are known as the *gestrenge Herren* ("harsh masters") or *Eisheiligen* ("ice saints"). The *saints de glace* ("ice saints") are also well known in France.

A letter from Mr. J. F. Llewellyn, cooperative observer, Mexico, Mo., mentions "old woman's winter" as a name current in Germany for this period, the cold being "supposed to kill off old women." We are not familiar with this expression, though *Altweibersommer* is a common German designation for the European equivalent of our Indian summer.

Are there still other popular names for the cold spell in May?

HORSE LATITUDES.

The "horse latitudes" are the regions of calms and variable winds coinciding with the subtropical high-pressure belts lying on the poleward sides of the trade-winds; especially (and, according to a majority of writers, exclusively) the portion of the North Atlantic Ocean lying within the high-pressure belt; sometimes only the portion of this region near Bermuda. The principal attempts to explain this name are set forth in the following quotations:

The latitudes where these calms chiefly reign are named the horse-latitudes by mariners * * * because they are fatal to horses and other cattle which are transported to the last-mentioned continent [America].—G. Forster, "Voyage round the world," 1777, 2, 581.

Vessels formerly engaged in conveying horses from New England to the West Indies were often detained in this calm belt for many days, when the large cargo of animals would exhaust the stock of water and become frantic with thirst. To save a portion, the rest were thrown overboard; hence the origin of the term "Horse Latitudes"—A. K. Johnston, "Physical atlas," 2d ed., 1856, p. 61, footnote 6.

Between these westerly winds and the northeast trade there is a part of the ocean where the winds are of a most changeable character * * * severe gales are common. * * * Speaking roughly, this part of the ocean lies between the Azores and Bermuda, and at a very early period in Atlantic navigation received from the Spaniards the name of *el golfo de las yeguas*, the mares' sea, in allusion to its boisterous nature and in contradistinction to *el golfo de las damas*, the ladies' sea, as the trade wind region was called, from its being so smooth and easy to sail over. It is this name, *el golfo de las yeguas*, which our sailors translated into The Horse Latitudes; and the story of ships

laden with horses being becalmed so long that they had to throw their cargo overboard was probably invented at a comparatively recent date. * * * There are, however, many instances in English in which the word *horse* is used as a prefix denoting boisterous; as, for instance, a *horse-laugh*, *horse-play*.—J. K. Laughton, "Physical geography," 1870, p. 24–25.

Between the N. E. trades, and the westerly winds which prevail more or less to the northward of them, there is a belt of variable and light winds, which have, perhaps somewhat vaguely, been called the *Calms of Cancer*—a term which will not express its characteristics. It is called, also, the *Horse Latitudes*, from the fact that vessels in former years, employed in carrying horses to the West Indies, were frequently obliged to throw them overboard during the embarrassment caused by the continual changes, sudden gusts and calms, rains, thunder and lightning, which are general in it.—A. G. Findlay, "Memoir * * * of the northern Atlantic Ocean," 14th ed., 1879, p. 229.

Diesem friedlichen Gebiet [the trade-wind region between the Cape Verde Islands and the West Indies, called *el golfo de las damas*] stellten sie die stürmische See nördlich von 35° N. Br. gegen über als *el golfo de las yeguas*, also das "Stutenmeer." Dieser sonderbare Name bezieht sich ursprünglich nicht auf den ganzen zwischen 35° und 40° quer über den Ozean laufenden Streifen, sondern nur auf den Meerestrich nordöstlich der Kanarien, wo nämlich die von Andalusien nach Westindien segelnden spanischen Truppen ihre Pferde in grosser Zahl auf ihren kleinen Schiffen verloren und über Bord warfen. Wie es scheint, ist unabhängig hier von in der neueren Literatur ein diesem ähnlicher Ausdruck, nämlich die "Rossbreiten" (*horse latitudes*), in Aufnahme gekommen. Darunter wurde zunächst nur das Gebiet bei den Bermudas-Inseln zwischen 27° und 35° N. Br. verstanden, und Maury erklärt den Namen ebenfalls durch das gewohnheitsmässige Überbordwerfen von Pferden auf der Fahrt von den Neuengland-Staaten nach Westindien, woran hier die übermässige Verzögerung der Reise in den dort häufigen leichten Winden und Stillen schuld war; er selbst aber hat diese Benennung auf die ganze Zone des Nordatlantischen Ozeans in der Nähe von 30° N. Br. ausgedehnt, in der die Kalmen und Mallungen des absteigenden Luftstroms bei hohem Barometerstande gefunden werden.—Deutsche Seewarte, "Segelhandbuch für den Atlantischen Ozean," 2d ed., 1899, p. 3.

The present writer has also seen somewhere the suggestion that this name is derived from the French phrase *hors des alizés* ("outside the trade winds").

A recent letter from Mr. E. R. Miller, in charge of the Weather Bureau station at Madison, Wis., calls attention to the fact that Messrs. Linke and Clössner, in their "Wetterkundliche Unterricht" (Frankfurt a. M., 1911), page 112, have made a laughable blunder in attempting to explain the German term *Rossbreite*, which is, of course, merely the literal equivalent of "horse latitudes." The passage in question is as follows:

Die Gebiete des höchsten Luftdrucks liegen um 30° südlicher und nördlicher Breite. Diese beiden Gürtel hohen Druckes rund um die Erde führen nach dem Weltumsegler Ross den Namen "Rossbreiten."